

March 2005
DOH PUB. #331-287

The Office of Drinking Water

Mission

The mission of the Office of Drinking Water (ODW), a part of the Environmental Health Division of the Washington Department of Health, is to protect the health of the people of Washington by assuring safe and reliable drinking water.

About five million of the state's six million residents are served by 16,900 regulated public water systems. Another million residents are served by about 340,000 private sources such as wells, which are not subject to state or federal drinking water regulations.

ODW regulates public water systems under state law, and under a formal agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for carrying out the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, which establishes minimum standards for drinking water quality.

Preventing problems

ODW helps to ensure drinking water is safe and reliable through programs that rely on prevention as the first line of defense, with a goal of avoiding potentially health-threatening and costly problems.

Water system inspections or sanitary surveys look at all aspects of water plant operations, including water sources, pumps, storage tanks, treatment units, filtration plants, records of water monitoring, and future needs. Water system operator certification and training ensures that qualified, capable people are operating public water systems.

Technical assistance programs, grant and loan programs, and construction plan reviews help ensure that water systems are designed and operated properly. Ongoing surveillance allows contamination and other problems to be found and solved as early as possible. And enforcement strategies ensure water systems address water quality and water delivery risks in a timely manner.

Emergency response

Responding to actual or potential public health emergencies is ODW's highest priority. Disruption in the supply of safe drinking water poses a health risk. Reasons for the disruption can include water main breaks, water system distribution or water quality problems, earthquakes, floods, power outages, windstorms, or acts of vandalism or terrorism. Contamination of drinking water supplies can come from bacterial, chemical, or other sources.



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

When an emergency occurs, ODW works hand in hand with the water system, the community, and the local health jurisdiction to get things back to normal. A toll-free, after-hours hotline provides system operators easy access to our technical staff.

Keeping customers informed

Public water systems are required to test the water they supply for contaminants that may cause health problems. They provide customers with a yearly Consumer Confidence Report that includes information about the quality of their drinking water. For acute health risks such as bacterial contamination, water systems must notify their customers within 24 hours.

Contact Information:

Office of Drinking Water toll-free number: (800) 521-2536

Operator Certification Program: (800) 525-2536

ODW Regional Offices:

Eastern Region (509) 456-3115

Serving Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima counties.

Northwest Region (253) 395-6750

Island, King, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties.

Southwest Region (360) 664-0768

Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum counties.

